(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when it is expected to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (c) No, Sir persons with disability including those belonging to the minorities are eligible for reservation under the Provisions of the Persons with Disability (Equal opportunities, Full Participation and Protection of Rights) Act, 2005 in admission to public institutions.

Regulating distance and Online Education

3612. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether, in an effort to regulate distance and online education in the country, the Ministry sought Cabinet's approval to set up a statutory body to monitor courses being provided by the foreign universities/colleges through Internet;

(b) whether the Ministry has prepared a draft law to provide legal backing to Distance Education Council;

(c) whether a Parliamentary Standing Committee has recommended that the Council should be an independent regulatory body and that the Council would be an apex body for obtaining approval for all forms of distance education modes; and

(d) if so, by when a final decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development in its 172nd & 202nd Reports has recommended to give Distance Education Council (DEC) an independent statutory status. Accordingly, a proposal to establish an independent statutory body for promotion, coordination, determination and regulation of standards in the open and distance education system, which includes on-line education, is in an advanced stage of consideration. This statutory body is lso proposed to be empowered to regulate the entry and operation of foreign distance education providers; and

Vacant posts in Supreme Court and High Courts

3613. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of vacant posts of Judges in the Supreme Court of India and various High Courts at present;

(b) the details of vacant posts that have been filled-up during the last two years; and

(c) the steps taken to fill up the existing vacant poasts?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) A Statement is enclosed (*See* below)

(c) Pursuant to the Supreme Court Judgment of October 6, 1993 read with their Advisory Opinion of October 28, 1998, the process of initiation of proposal for appointment of Judges of a High Court lies with the Chief Justice of that High Court. The Government has been requesting the Chief Justices of the High Courts, from time to time, to initiate proposals for filling up of the present vacancies as well as the vacancies anticipated during the next six months.